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Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 2227 (2015), by which the Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) until 30 June 2016 and requested me to report every three months on the situation in Mali, focusing on progress in the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali and on the efforts of MINUSMA to support it. The present report covers the period from 12 June to 16 September 2015.

II. Major political developments

Progress in the political process

2. Since my last report (S/2015/426), the political process in Mali has made noticeable progress, in particular with the signing of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali emanating from the Algiers process (Accord pour la paix et la réconciliation au Mali issu du processus d'Alger) by the Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad (CMA) on 20 June. Following the takeover of Ménaka (Gao region) by the Platform coalition of armed groups on 27 April, CMA had set as a condition of its adherence to the peace agreement the withdrawal by the Platform from Ménaka, and refused to join the signing ceremony with the Government of Mali and the Platform on 15 May. As was previously reported, my Special Representative continued to exercise good offices and advocated for confidence-building among the Malian parties, in close collaboration with the lead mediator, Algeria, and the mediation, in an effort to bring CMA to sign the peace agreement, including by encouraging the Platform to withdraw from Ménaka. He also encouraged the Government to lift arrest warrants against CMA leaders and release some of their detainees held in Bamako. Following a collective intervention by the mediation, comprising Algeria, the United Nations/MINUSMA, the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the European Union, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, Burkina Faso, Chad, Mauritania and the Niger, and its assistance to the Platform leadership to visit Ménaka, the Platform announced its immediate withdrawal from Ménaka on 18 June. On 19 June, the Government of Mali lifted the arrest warrants against 15 leaders of CMA, including against Bilal Ag Cherif and Mohamed Ag Najim from the Mouvement national de libération de l'Azawad (MNLA), Alghabass Ag Intalla from the Haut conseil pour

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l'unité de l'Azawad (HCUA) and Sidi Brahim Ould Sidatt from the Mouvement arabe de l'Azawad (MAA-CMA). The lifting of the arrest warrants helped assuage the concern expressed by CMA leadership over their possible arrest when travelling to Bamako for the signing of the peace agreement.

3. Subsequently, on 20 June in Bamako, Sidi Brahim Ould Sidatt from MAA-CMA signed the peace agreement on behalf of CMA. Over 150 CMA representatives from Kidal and the subregion attended the ceremony. On 23 June, President Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta met with the leadership of CMA in Bamako to discuss the way forward. On 25 June, the National Assembly approved financial provisions to start the implementation of the peace agreement.

4. Meanwhile, my Special Representative continued to engage the international community to mobilize resources in support of projects aimed at generating peace dividends for the Malian people and sustaining their adherence to the peace agreement. MINUSMA also sponsored a nationwide campaign, involving members of Parliament, political parties, youth and women organizations and local media and religious leaders, aimed at explaining the content of the peace agreement to the Malian people and seek their support for its implementation.

Implementation of the peace agreement: political and institutional measures

5. Following the signing of the peace agreement by CMA, efforts to establish the implementation framework foreseen by the peace agreement, namely the Comité de suivi de l'accord and its technical bodies, were initiated. On 20 June, Algeria officially launched the Comité, which subsequently focused its attention on defining its rules of procedure and the timelines for the implementation of the provisions of the peace agreement. However, this first meeting was adjourned owing to disagreement on the participation in the Comité mechanisms by two former CMA armed groups, namely the Coalition du peuple pour l'Azawad-CMA (CPA-CMA) and the Coordination des mouvements et fronts patriotiques de résistance II (CMFPR-II), which had signed the peace agreement independently but were not included in the Comité. Consultations on membership of the Comité continued during its second meeting on 3 and 4 July. At its third meeting, on 21 and 22 July, the Comité adopted its rules of procedure with the exception of provisions concerning membership and timelines. The rules of procedure clarified the mandate, functions and organs of the Comité, and provided for the inclusion of France, Nigeria and the United States of America as official members of the mediation. At the fourth meeting of the Comité, held on 24 and 25 August, the Malian parties accepted the proposal of Algeria to allow the participation of CPA-CMA and CMFPR-II as invitees, pending the resolution of the issue of their membership at the next meeting. The Comité also adopted a global action plan for the implementation of the peace agreement, which was presented by the Government of Mali but in the absence of CMA.

6. On 21 July, the Comité agreed that Algeria, which chairs the Comité, would also co-chair the four thematic subcommittees along with MINUSMA (defence and security), the African Union (political institutions), ECOWAS (justice, reconciliation and humanitarian issues) and the European Union (socioeconomic and cultural development). The Malian parties have yet to designate the vice-chairs of the four subcommittees. For its part, MINUSMA initiated the establishment of the Comité secretariat by developing plans to create a dedicated structure to provide substantive, administrative and logistical support to the Comité and its subcommittees.

7. Despite the progress made with the signing of the peace agreement, however, the continued tensions among some of the signatories in northern Mali, as evidenced by the armed confrontations between CMA and the Platform in August, have hampered efforts towards the full operationalization of the Comité. Following the takeover of a CMA-controlled town, Anéfis (Kidal region), by the Platform on 17 August, CMA announced the suspension of its participation in the technical work of the Comité until the Platform withdrew from Anéfis.

8. In reaction, and as described in the next section, MINUSMA engaged the leadership of both parties to de-escalate tensions and took preventive military measures, including by establishing a security zone covering a 20 km radius around Kidal to protect civilians. On 24 August, the Comité created an ad hoc group composed of the mediation and chaired by the African Union in order to address the situation in Anéfis. On the same day, the ad hoc group proposed a seven-point disengagement plan that, inter alia, called for the immediate and unconditional return of the parties to the positions held when the peace agreement was signed on 20 June. On 26 August, all parties accepted the plan with the exception of the Platform. On 30 August, MINUSMA facilitated the transportation of a Platform delegation to Anéfis by way of Gao; the delegation stayed in Gao for several days to consult with its supporters in that town. On 2 September, President Keïta, who was visiting Niamey, the Niger, called upon the Platform to immediately and unconditionally withdraw from Anéfis. On 5 September, the Platform issued a statement announcing its intention to withdraw from Anéfis. On 7 September, the Platform began withdrawing from Anéfis and re-established their positions approximately 15 to 30 km south of that town.

Other political developments

9. On 3 August, the Government of Mali adopted a decree establishing the date of local and regional elections for 25 October. However, the related measures envisaged by the peace agreement, including the revision of the electoral law, have yet to be implemented. MINUSMA continued nevertheless to work with the Malian electoral management bodies and partners to support preparations for the elections, including assisting nationwide efforts by the Government to enrol voters and revise the voters lists. The preparations, however, could not be conducted in Ténenkou (Mopti region), Ménaka and Kidal region owing to security concerns. The anticipated creation of new administrative areas (Cercles) and the implementation of new legislative measures, as envisaged by the peace agreement, and the future redeployment of civil servants will be critical factors in the planning of the local and regional elections.

10. The persistent security concerns prevented the full redeployment of civil servants to the northern regions. As at 16 September, 3 of 4 prefects and 18 of 23 sub-prefects were present in Gao region; all 8 prefects and 46 of 55 sub-prefects had resumed their duties in Mopti region; and all 5 prefects and 14 of 31 sub-prefects were deployed in Timbuktu region.

11. Regarding the justice sector, 88 per cent of judges and prosecutors have returned to their posts in the northern regions, although some of the magistrates did not maintain a continuous presence owing to security concerns. During the reporting period, MINUSMA supported the organization of five mobile courts in remote areas of Mopti region, allowing for the hearing of 23 cases and the sentencing of 12

defendants. In late June, the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights launched an emergency plan for judicial reform developed with the assistance of MINUSMA. The Mission also assisted national corrections personnel through mentoring and advising on prison security management and facilitated the reopening of the dispensary in Timbuktu prison on 22 July.

12. In the area of transitional justice, MINUSMA continued to provide technical assistance to the Government of Mali. On 29 June, MINUSMA organized a three-day conference on transitional justice issues in Bamako in collaboration with the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission, the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights and the Ministry of National Reconciliation. The representatives of the Government, CMA, the Platform and other armed groups, religious leaders, representatives of civil society, political parties, the National Assembly and the judiciary, as well as 26 national and international experts, also attended the conference.

13. On 3 August, the Government of Mali appointed Ousmane Oumarou Sidibé, a member of the Union pour la république et la démocratie opposition party, as Chair of the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission. CMA and the Platform criticized the Government for failing to consult with them on the appointment. On 6 August, the Government requested CMA and the Platform to designate five delegates each to the Commission; to date, neither group has complied with the request.

Regional cooperation on the Sahel

14. From 2 to 4 September in Bamako, the African Union organized the first meeting of the Defence Ministers of the Nouakchott Process on the enhancement of security cooperation and the operationalization of the African Peace and Security Architecture in the Sahelo-Saharan region. The meeting, which was co-chaired by the Chair of the African Union Peace and Security Council and the Malian Minister of Defence, was attended by member States of the Nouakchott Process and by representatives of the United Nations, ECOWAS and the European Union.

15. During the meeting, the Ministers took stock of the continued terrorist attacks against international forces, the Malian defence and security forces and the civilian population in Mali. They noted with concern the increased regrouping of terrorist organizations in Libya, including the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, and in the Lake Chad Basin, notably Boko Haram. Against that background, participants reiterated their commitment to enhance regional cooperation, including by conducting joint patrols along their common borders; called for more support to MINUSMA troop-contributing countries, including through the provision of equipment and training; and considered the establishment of an intervention force brigade to combat terrorism in northern Mali.

III. Major security developments

Security trends and developments

16. In spite of the signing of the peace agreement by all parties, the security situation remained extremely volatile. Violations of the ceasefire by the signatory armed groups were observed as they repositioned themselves in northern Mali. The continued tensions between CMA and the Platform in Gao, Kidal and Timbuktu regions further deepened the division between their supporters and triggered

intercommunal conflicts. Meanwhile, extremist and asymmetric attacks as well as criminal threats against the Malian defence and security forces and MINUSMA persisted throughout the reporting period, and have spread to formerly safer regions in central, western and southern Mali and along the borders with Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire and Mauritania.

Implementation of the peace agreement: ceasefire

17. The signatory armed groups continued to reposition themselves on the ground following the signing of the peace agreement on 20 June, including in and around Ménaka and in Gao and Kidal regions. On 1 July, a MINUSMA patrol observed 30 members of the Groupe d'autodéfense touareg Imghad et alliés (GATIA), a member of the Platform, approximately 8 km north of Ménaka in Inbaram. On 6 July, the MINUSMA Force received information from the local authorities in Inbaram indicating that the members of GATIA were harassing the population in the area. On 8 July, a MINUSMA patrol observed approximately 20 members of GATIA with five vehicles covertly entering Ménaka. They left the town the same day following a request by MINUSMA. The Malian armed forces maintained their presence in Ménaka during that period. MINUSMA also reinforced its posture in Ménaka by increasing the number of troops in the town from approximately 275 to 561 in order to protect civilians and monitor the situation. MINUSMA police also deployed a formed police unit detachment comprising 39 personnel to Ménaka. On 11 July, CMA reinforced its presence near Tin-Fadimata, approximately 50 km north of Ménaka. On 13 July, MINUSMA confirmed the presence of the Platform in Likrakar, approximately 20 km north of Timbuktu.

18. On 10 and 11 July, the joint observation and verification team of Gao, comprising the Government of Mali, CMA and the Platform, and tasked with investigating ceasefire violations, visited Ménaka and met with the local leadership, including the mayor, as well as the MINUSMA Force. Discussions focused on the security situation in and around the town as well as challenges related to the presence of armed combatants from the Platform. The joint observation and verification team also conducted a joint patrol with the MINUSMA Force on various access roads to Ménaka.

19. From 15 to 17 August, armed elements associated with CMA and GATIA clashed in the vicinity of Touzek (60 km south-east of Kidal), east of Amassine (Kidal region) and on the Tabankort-Anéfis axis. On 17 August, GATIA took control of Anéfis which, under the applicable ceasefire agreement, was under the control of CMA. That constituted the first major violation of the ceasefire since the signing of the peace agreement on 20 June, and was unequivocally condemned by the Government, the mediation and the international community.

20. MINUSMA has engaged the political and military leadership on both sides since the onset of the clashes to de-escalate tensions. In parallel, on 16 August, MINUSMA deployed helicopters to monitor the situation in Amassine and Anéfis. On 17 August, MINUSMA dispatched two attack helicopters to observe the positions of the two groups and to deter further fighting. On 18 August, MINUSMA announced the establishment of a security zone covering a 20 km radius around Kidal to protect civilians. Meanwhile, an investigation mission by a joint observation and verification team arrived in Anéfis on 18 August. CMA did not participate in that first visit. Following a second visit on 22 August, this time with the participation of CMA, the

team established that the Platform (GATIA) had occupied Anéfis, although it was unable to establish the conditions that had led to the occupation.

21. In Timbuktu region, MINUSMA observed that CMA had spread across a large area from Ber to Foïta, near the border with Mauritania. On 6 September, MINUSMA received information that CMA had established four new positions in Goundam Cercle, Timbuktu region. The joint observation and verification team of Timbuktu, which conducted an assessment mission to Goundam Cercle from 11 to 12 September, concluded that the establishment of the four new positions by CMA was in violation of the ceasefire.

22. Towards the end of the reporting period, new movements on the part of the Platform and CMA in Kidal and Timbuktu regions were reported. MINUSMA is closely monitoring the situation, particularly in Infara and In-Khalil (Kidal region), where the Mission has deployed air assets to identify, deter and, as necessary, counter threats to the civilian population. The Mission is continuing to urge the return of all groups to their original positions. The security zone around Kidal and temporary positions of MINUSMA military personnel around Anéfis will be maintained, while its posture in Tessalit is being reinforced. On 15 September, MINUSMA observed that the Platform (GATIA) took a position 15 km west of Aguelhok, prompting CMA to take defensive positions east of that town.

23. The 40 newly authorized MINUSMA military observers mandated to monitor and supervise the ceasefire are in the process of being deployed. As at 16 September, 13 military observers had been deployed to Mali. MINUSMA plans to operationalize the command structure of the military observers and to deploy 11 military observers to each of the three sectors by late October.

Implementation of the peace agreement: defence and security measures

24. On 5 August, the Force Commander of MINUSMA convened the final meeting of the Commission technique mixte de sécurité, during which the parties agreed, inter alia, to replace that Commission with the Commission technique de sécurité, in accordance with the peace agreement. The parties also agreed to launch the identification process of the cantonment sites and to establish the Mécanisme opérationnel de coordination to facilitate and coordinate joint patrols. They also decided to set up a joint observation and verification team in Kidal; the process, however, has been delayed owing to the lack of infrastructure and the absence of the members appointed by CMA.

25. On 1 and 2 September, the MINUSMA Deputy Force Commander convened the first meeting of the Commission technique de sécurité in Bamako. CMA did not participate on the first day in protest of the continued presence of the Platform in Anéfis, and only briefly attended a session on the second day. Despite the absence of CMA, the Commission discussed the identification of cantonment sites and the terms of reference of the Mécanisme opérationnel de coordination. The second meeting of the Commission was planned for 15 September, but was postponed twice to 17 September.

26. Following the signing of the peace agreement on 20 June, MINUSMA and the United Nations Office for Project Services initiated eight community violence reduction projects in Gao, Kidal and Timbuktu in order to mitigate the potential risks of recruitment by criminal and armed groups of civilians. On 23 June and

23 July, MINUSMA supported the conducting of two workshops on the democratic control of the security sector and on the role of civil society in security sector reform. On 10 August, MINUSMA and partners, including the African Union, ECOWAS and the European Union, established a technical working group on security sector reform and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration in order to coordinate support to Malian security institutions.

Asymmetric and extremist attacks

27. The worrisome trend of violent extremist and asymmetric threats against the Malian defence and security forces and MINUSMA continued during the reporting period. On 14 June in Sofara, 30 km north-east of Djenné in Mopti region, unidentified men set fire to the post of the gendarmerie. On 27 June, Ansar Dine attacked the gendarmerie and National Guard camp in Nara, 30 km south of the border with Mauritania, in Koulikoro region, resulting in three Malian armed forces soldiers killed and five others wounded, while nine assailants were killed. On 28 June, approximately 20 members of Ansar Dine attacked Fakola, in Sikasso region, 20 km from the border with Côte d'Ivoire; the assailants burned Malian defence and security forces positions and offices of the local administration, and looted a bank. On 4 July, unidentified armed men attacked a joint post of the gendarmerie and National Guard in Sokoura commune, 75 km south of Bankass near the border with Burkina Faso. On 27 July, six armed men in a vehicle opened fire on a Malian armed forces vehicle near Kabara, 2 km south of Timbuktu, injuring one soldier. On 1 August, assailants ambushed a convoy of Malian defence and security forces travelling on the Diabaly-Nampala road in Ségou region, killing two personnel and wounding five others. On 3 August, several armed individuals identified as members of the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa infiltrated the town of Gourma-Rharous in Timbuktu region in pickup trucks and attacked a joint base of the Malian armed forces, National Guard and gendarmerie, resulting in 10 soldiers killed. On 10 August, a vehicle of the Malian defence and security forces struck an explosive device in the vicinity of Ténenkou, Mopti region, killing three personnel and injuring four others. On 12 August, shooting occurred at a police post in Bamako, wounding one police officer and one civilian bystander. On 2 September, unidentified armed men attacked Malian armed forces soldiers in Kera village, 28 km from Ténenkou, Mopti region, injuring seven soldiers. On 12 September, six unidentified armed men attacked Ouankoro village, Bankass Cercle in Mopti region, approximately 5 km north of the border with Burkina Faso, killing one gendarme.

28. On 13 July, the Malian defence and security forces arrested 20 individuals suspected of being associated with terrorist groups in the vicinity of Zégoua in Sikasso region, near the border with Côte d'Ivoire. On 14 July, the Malian defence and security forces arrested an individual who crossed into Ségou region from Côte d'Ivoire for his alleged involvement in the 7 March attack on the restaurant La Terrasse in Bamako. On 3 September in Côte d'Ivoire, Ivorian authorities arrested seven suspects with alleged links to Ansar Dine for attacks against the Malian military in southern Mali, and handed them over to Malian authorities.

29. On 7 and 8 August, following an attack on a Malian armed forces post in Sévaré (Mopti region), four MINUSMA contractors and a Malian civilian were killed during the siege of a hotel located near the Malian armed forces post by unidentified armed men. The Malian armed forces launched a military operation against the assailants on 8 August, during which four MINUSMA contractors were

rescued. During the incident 4 Malian armed forces soldiers were killed and 10 others wounded.

30. Threats against MINUSMA and its convoys increased in the regions of Gao, Kidal and Timbuktu. During the reporting period, hostile acts against MINUSMA peacekeepers resulted in 6 peacekeepers killed and 11 injured. On 16 June, unidentified assailants launched five rockets in the direction of the MINUSMA camp in Aguelhok, Kidal region. On 19 June, unidentified assailants fired at a MINUSMA convoy travelling from Gao to Kidal, 15 km south of Almoustarat in Gao region; no casualties were reported. On the same day, an improvised explosive device consisting of two anti-tank mines was found 650 metres south of the MINUSMA camp in Ber, Timbuktu region. A MINUSMA explosive ordnance disposal team neutralized the device. On 2 July, a MINUSMA patrol was ambushed 45 km south-west of Timbuktu, resulting in six peacekeepers killed and five injured. Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb claimed responsibility for the attack. On 4 July, unidentified assailants fired at a MINUSMA convoy travelling from Gao to Kidal, approximately 70 km north of Gao; no casualties were sustained. On 24 July, unidentified assailants fired eight mortar shells towards the MINUSMA camp in Aguelhok, Kidal region, which landed outside the camp without causing any casualties. On 8 August, a vehicle of the MINUSMA Force conducting a mine clearance operation at Kidal airstrip struck an explosive device without causing any casualties. On 11 August, two armed men attacked a MINUSMA-contracted truck, partially burning the trailer and its contents. On 21 August, unidentified assailants fired at a MINUSMA convoy traveling on the Gao-Anéfis axis some 75 km north of Gao. On 22 August, unidentified assailants fired at a MINUSMA convoy and a MINUSMA Force vehicle struck an explosive device some 70 km east of Ansongo in Gao region, injuring two MINUSMA personnel. On 5 September, a MINUSMA military vehicle escorting a MINUSMA logistics convoy hit an explosive device 53 km east of Ansongo in Gao region, leaving two peacekeepers slightly injured and one civilian contractor seriously wounded. Peacekeepers arrested three suspected perpetrators at the site and handed them over to the gendarmerie in Gao. On 11 September, unidentified armed men ambushed a MINUSMA logistics convoy 15 km north of Gao on the Gao-Anéfis road, leaving two peacekeepers injured. Al Mourabitoun claimed responsibility for the attack.

Protection of civilians

31. Armed banditry, intercommunal violence, indiscriminate attacks by extremist groups and retaliation from armed groups due to suspected support to the opposite group constituted the main threats of physical violence to civilians, resulting in an increased level of civilian casualties during June and July compared to the previous reporting period. However, civilian casualties reportedly decreased in August. The efforts by MINUSMA to ensure the implementation of ceasefire arrangements and the protection of civilians in populated areas included short- and long-range patrols independently and in coordination with the Malian defence and security forces. After Malian authorities indicated to the Mission that there were increased threats of attacks by extremist groups, the Mission enhanced joint patrols and protective police activities to increase security for the end of Ramadan festivities in Gao, Kidal, Mopti, Timbuktu and Ségou regions. In addition, the Mission documented cases of harassment, forced displacement and infringement on the freedom of movement of communities, in particular around Ménaka following the withdrawal of GATIA, and

in the context of intercommunal conflicts in Koro, Mopti region, and in Ber, Timbuktu region.

32. On 17 July, in Talataye, 180 km east of Gao in Gao region, a dispute over cattle theft erupted between members of the Daoussak and Imghad Tuareg communities with reported ties to CMA and the Platform, respectively. On 18 July in Mopti region, following a dispute over land, armed men from the Peulh community killed six members of the Dogon community: two in Kobou village, 35 km east of Boulékéssi, and four others in a settlement located 30 km from Niangassadjou, close to the border with Burkina Faso. On 20 July, fighting between members of the Imghad and Daoussak communities in Indelimane, 120 km east of Ansongo in Gao region, resulted in the execution of two members of the Daoussak community. On 31 August, several criminal activities by armed men against local communities were reported in Ber, Timbuktu region, wounding two civilians.

33. To assist with the prevention and resolution of intercommunal conflicts and foster dialogue between communities, the Mission held 18 intercommunal meetings between 9 July and 6 August in Gao region to enhance social cohesion and reconciliation. More than 2,100 people from different Cercles, including 240 women, attended the meetings. On 30 August, following the initiative of the mayor of Djébok, Gao region, community leaders from the Daoussak, Iderfane Tuareg and Imghad Tuareg communities agreed to cease hostilities. Between July and August, MINUSMA deployed 24 community liaison assistants to Gao, Kidal, Mopti and Timbuktu to strengthen contacts and communication with local communities and foster their confidence in the Mission, including by gaining a better understanding of the population's concerns and expectations of the Mission.

34. Meanwhile, throughout the reporting period, the United Nations Mine Action Service continued to organize educational sessions about the risks of explosive hazards, small arms and light weapons in the communities in Gao, Kidal, Mopti and Timbuktu regions, focusing on the areas of Djébock, Konna and Ménaka owing to the increased number of incidents in those areas.

IV. Human rights

35. MINUSMA continued to document violations and abuses of human rights and international humanitarian law committed by the Malian defence and security forces, CMA, the Platform, extremist groups and other unidentified armed elements. At least 29 cases involving 70 victims were documented during the reporting period, including 21 cases of torture and ill-treatment, 4 cases of summary and arbitrary execution and 3 cases of arbitrary arrest and detention. The most affected regions were Gao, Sikasso and Timbuktu.

36. As at 16 September, 294 conflict-related detainees were held in State-run detention facilities. The Malian defence and security forces arrested and detained at least 98 people for conflict-related charges during the reporting period, including 48 detained during counter-terrorism operations. That constitutes a decrease compared to the previous reporting period (151). Among the 60 detainees visited by MINUSMA, 32 cases of ill-treatment and torture by the Malian defence and security forces and the Platform were documented.

37. As part of the confidence-building measures, CMA and the Platform requested the Government of Mali to release at least 196 detainees. In mid-July, the Government initiated the release of 44 detainees, of which 17 were affiliated with the Platform and 27 with CMA. In late July, MINUSMA raised concern over the planned release of 17 of those 44 detainees, as they were charged with, inter alia, terrorism, attacks against MINUSMA personnel and premises and war crimes. The Government subsequently assured MINUSMA that the 17 detainees would remain in detention until the conclusion of the relevant judicial proceedings. Between 4 and 6 August, a governmental joint commission led by the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights reviewed the files of all detainees whose release had been contemplated as part of the confidence-building measures, and concluded that 43 detainees could not be released as there were substantial grounds to believe that they might have committed war crimes, crimes against humanity or gross violations of human rights.

38. CMA still holds 34 detainees, including 22 Malian defence and security forces personnel, while GATIA still detains 4 CMA members who were captured after the confrontations in Anéfis on 17 August. In relation to the violations and abuses committed in Tin Hama (Gao region) by GATIA and CMA in May, MINUSMA officially transmitted its investigation report to the Government in August.

39. The number of verified conflict-related sexual violence cases decreased from 23 to 2 cases since my last report. Between 12 June and 1 August, two attempted rape cases were documented, including one in Gao region committed against a woman by two members of CPA-CMA, and one against a minor involving a Malian defence and security forces element who was subsequently arrested by the gendarmerie in Timbuktu region. In June and July, the United Nations Population Fund reported 283 cases of gender-based violence in Bamako, Gao, Mopti and Timbuktu, of which 272 cases involved women.

40. Children continued to be victims of the conflict, and an increased number were killed or maimed. During the reporting period, three children were killed and three others injured in the explosion of two unexploded ordnances in Konna, Mopti region, and Ménaka. Separately, 10 other children between the ages of 6 and 15 were injured in three incidents involving unexploded ordnances in Gao and Ménaka. A victim assistance project funded by the United Nations Mine Action Service supported 150 survivors of explosive incidents and people with disabilities at care centres in Gao and Timbuktu through rehabilitation care, assistive devices and socioeconomic support.

41. During the reporting period, the United Nations verified the presence of 12 children among armed groups and extremist groups: 8 within the ranks of GATIA in Ménaka; 3 within the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa in Mopti region; and 1 within Ansar Dine in Kidal region. One unconfirmed minor was found among GATIA combatants in the custody of CMA in Kidal region. A total of eight children remained detained, some since 2013, by the authorities in Bamako for alleged association with armed groups.

V. Humanitarian situation

42. Humanitarian access remained a challenge and affected the provision of assistance, particularly in Gao and Timbuktu regions, where the movements of humanitarian personnel and goods were restricted. To mitigate those risks,

humanitarian actors relied on air transport to support their operations, and MINUSMA played an essential role in ensuring the security of secondary airstrips used by humanitarian actors. The poor road conditions during the rainy season and damaged airstrips in Kidal and Ménaka were also an impediment to the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

43. The number of security incidents affecting humanitarian personnel in 2015 has already reached almost three times that of 2014. A total of 22 incidents were recorded during the reporting period, bringing the total number of incidents so far in 2015 to 61. The increase in the looting of food aid organizations reduced aid by approximately 90 tons of food.

44. The results of the nationwide Standardized Monitoring and Assessment of Relief and Transitions (SMART) nutrition survey launched during the time period from May to July by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Food Programme (WFP), the World Health Organization and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), in conjunction with the Malian authorities, indicated that global acute malnutrition in Mali remained at a worryingly high level. In Timbuktu region, it reached a critical level, with 17.5 per cent of children under the age of 5 affected by acute malnutrition, among whom almost 4 per cent suffered from severe acute malnutrition. The situation was precarious in Kayés, Koulikoro, Mopti and Timbuktu regions and increasingly worrisome in Sikasso region. In collaboration with its partners and the Ministry of Health, UNICEF and WFP provided treatment to at least 57,000 children and 23,000 women suffering from acute malnutrition across the country from June to August.

45. Nationwide, it was estimated that 3.1 million people experienced food insecurity, including 450,000 who suffered from severe food insecurity. In response, WFP provided food assistance to approximately 350,000 people and nutrition support to 120,000 children and lactating mothers for the prevention of malnutrition during the lean season. In July, FAO started providing livestock support to 8,639 pastoralists through assistance that included 950 tons of animal feeds, vaccines and deworming drugs in Gao, Mopti and Timbuktu regions. Activities contributing to the restoration, improvement and protection of 2,000 hectares of pastureland in the districts of Bourem and Gao started in September and are being implemented through cash transfer methods.

46. According to the figures provided by the Government of Mali, the total number of internally displaced persons in Mali decreased from 102,757 in May to 78,183 as at 31 July. The majority of internally displaced persons moved within the same districts of Goundam and Gourma-Rharous (Timbuktu region) to flee attacks carried out by armed individuals. Meanwhile, 137,789 Malian refugees remained in neighbouring countries where they received assistance and protection from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and its partners in refugee camps.

47. In response to a measles outbreak in Kidal region during the reporting period, UNICEF coordinated with the Government, the local authorities of Kidal based in Gao, non-governmental organizations and local communities to support the response against the outbreak.

48. The Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Sahel completed a visit to Mali from 10 to 14 August. The 2015 humanitarian appeal for Mali, the second-largest

appeal of the nine countries of the Sahel, amounted to $377 million to address the most pressing needs throughout the country, such as access to basic social services, protection and food security. The appeal has only been funded at 35 per cent so far.

VI. Economic development and cultural preservation

49. On 6 July, as envisaged by the peace agreement, the representatives of the African Development Bank, the Islamic Development Bank and the World Bank presented to Prime Minister Modibo Keïta the concept and methodology of a joint needs assessment mission that would be used to mobilize the financial support needed to improve the living standards of the people in northern Mali. The United Nations country team and MINUSMA provided technical and logistical support for the preparation of the mission. On 23 August, members of the Comité de suivi de l'accord subcommittee on socioeconomic and cultural development endorsed the approach adopted by the development banks.

50. On 13 July, my Special Representative visited Brussels and held discussions with representatives of the European Union to secure continued political, financial and technical support for the projects to deliver peace dividends in northern Mali. He held similar consultations in Bamako with various donors who expressed strong interest in supporting such projects. Pledges included new contributions from Denmark, the Netherlands and Switzerland to the Trust Fund in Support of Peace and Security in Mali.

51. On 10 July, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) finalized the assessment report on the Tomb of Askia in Gao region to prepare for upcoming conservation works. On 15 June and 13 August, MINUSMA visited Gao in coordination with the Ministry of Culture, Crafts and Tourism to demarcate the archaeological site of Sanèye, located 6 km from the town, in order to protect the site from looting, as the site had been looted and subjected to illicit excavations. On 18 July, the Director General of UNESCO visited Timbuktu and inaugurated the mausoleums in the cemetery of the Three Saints. UNESCO conducted an architectural assessment of the Timbuktu mosques of Sankoré and Sidi Yahia from 29 July to 3 August in view of their future rehabilitation. On 7 September, UNESCO completed the reconstruction of 14 mausoleums in Timbuktu, which were destroyed in 2012.

VII. Deployment and capacities of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali

52. As at 16 September, 82 per cent of all MINUSMA civilian staff had been deployed, including 81 per cent of international posts, 70 per cent of United Nations Volunteer positions and 86 per cent of national posts. In terms of gender distribution, women represented 30 per cent of international posts, 33 per cent of United Nations Volunteer positions and 21 per cent of national posts. As at 16 September, the strength of the Mission's police component stood at 1,023 personnel, reaching 72 per cent of its authorized strength of 1,440, with 58 per cent of individual police officers (8 per cent of them women) and 75 per cent of the formed police unit personnel (3 per cent of them women) deployed. As at 16 September, the strength of the Mission's military component stood at 10,482 troops out of an authorized strength of 11,240,

representing 93 per cent of authorized military personnel. Women represented 2 per cent of the Force.

53. Efforts to achieve full operating capability continued. In Sector West, the deployment of a second infantry battalion in Diabaly (Ségou region) reinforced the Mission's operations and footprint in central Mali. Progress was made in the preparations for the deployment of transport helicopter units to Sectors North and West, including the construction of hangars, with one unit to arrive in Timbuktu by early October. Concerns over the operational capability of some infantry units remained, owing to the lack of sufficient contingent-owned equipment including both major equipment and self-sustainment capabilities.

54. The persistent targeting of MINUSMA civilian contracted convoys by armed extremist and criminal groups, using ambush tactics, mines and improvised explosive devices, continued to require the MINUSMA Force to employ considerable assets to escort convoys, in turn reducing resources available for the Mission to conduct patrols and protect civilians. During the reporting period, seven attacks on MINUSMA convoys were recorded. In order to address threats against logistics convoys and secure the delivery of life supporting goods while also ensuring that troops are able to focus on other priority mandated tasks, it has been determined that the Mission requires a combat convoy battalion specializing in protecting logistics convoys travelling on the main supply routes.

55. Due to the persistent attacks against MINUSMA convoys, the Mission has also explored ways to secure road movements, including on the Gao-Kidal-Tessalit axis, and has sought alternate surface supply routes, such as from Cotonou, Benin, through Niamey to Gao. MINUSMA is also planning to establish capacity at the Niamey airport to facilitate troop rotations and cargo movements. MINUSMA also pursued alternate supply routes through Algeria to reach Kidal and Tessalit, which would reduce security risks associated with long-distance convoys along the Gao-Anéfis-Kidal-Aguelhok-Tessalit axis. The rehabilitation of the damaged Kidal airstrip continued, including through de-mining efforts with ground-penetrating radar, repairing fences and constructing three watchtowers. The deployment of a platoon on 24/7 guard duty contributed to ensuring steady progress. The Ménaka airstrip remained unavailable for landing fixed-wing air assets owing to security restrictions. As a result, personnel and cargo movement remained limited to rotary-wing landing within the secured MINUSMA camp in Ménaka. Those obstacles hampered the delivery of humanitarian assistance and routine supply operations. The development of air operations infrastructure at Bamako airport is pending the allocation of land by the Government.

56. During the reporting period, the United Nations Mine Action Service continued to support the safety of MINUSMA personnel by mitigating threats from explosives. Explosive hazard awareness, improvised explosive device response and first aid training continued to be provided, and 2,030 personnel were trained during the reporting period. A total of 14 field missions were conducted to identify and dispose of explosive hazards. The Mine Action Service also assisted with the pre-deployment training of 355 incoming MINUSMA infantry personnel from the Niger by providing improvised explosive device awareness training. On 27 July, the Mine Action Service resumed its operations in Mopti region, previously suspended in September 2014 as a result of the deteriorating security situation in the region, including the increase in incidents involving improvised explosive devices.

57. Following the 2 July ambush near Goundam in Timbuktu region during which six MINUSMA peacekeepers from Burkina Faso were killed, the Mission conducted a post-incident assessment. The assessment resulted in amendments to current procedures to improve the decision-making process on casualty evacuation so as to shorten the time necessary to bring medical assistance to the incident site and to enable the timely evacuation of the casualties. The assessment recommended that training of uniformed personnel on proper procedures in case of hostile incidents and the proper reporting of incidents must be improved.

58. Progress was made on the construction of the new headquarters in Bamako, including the completion of a supply warehouse and 80 per cent of foundation works, including fencing around the site. The relocation of staff from the Hotel Amitié site to the new headquarters is expected to take place in 2016. The Mission has also started transforming the military camp in Ménaka into an integrated camp for both the civilian and military components, as well as building forward operating bases at three locations in Anéfis, Ber (Timbuktu region) and Diabaly (Ségou region), in accordance with the revised operational approach.

59. MINUSMA continued to enhance its public information and outreach activities through the implementation of a mission-wide communications strategy, which prioritized efforts to explain its mandate to the population. MINUSMA also increased its engagement with the national media and communities in Bamako and the five regions. Radio Mikado became operational in Ménaka, Mopti and Kidal, in addition to Gao, Timbuktu and Bamako.

VIII. Observations

60. After nearly a year of dialogue, the conclusion of the inter-Malian peace talks, culminating with the signing of the peace and reconciliation agreement by CMA on 20 June, constituted a critical milestone on the path to lasting peace and reconciliation in Mali. I congratulate the Malian authorities for their gestures of goodwill ahead of the signing of the peace agreement by CMA, as well as all the parties for signing the peace agreement. I commend, once more, Algeria and the members of the mediation for their tireless and determined efforts to bring the peace negotiations to a successful conclusion. The onus is now on the Malian stakeholders to fulfil their obligations in the best interest of their people and the people of the entire region of the Sahel, who all yearn for peace and stability.

61. The peace process in Mali has now reached a new stage which will require the comprehensive engagement and assistance of the United Nations and the international community at large. In that regard, the magnitude of the challenges and risks of reversals should not be underestimated. Already, the recent violations of the ceasefire in Anéfis have highlighted the fragility of the peace process and the challenges posed to its implementation. For peace to hold, it is indispensable that the parties adhere in good faith to the peace agreement and its ceasefire provisions, and commit themselves to achieving key benchmarks, including respect for the ceasefire arrangements and the progressive redeployment of the recomposed Malian armed forces and State authority throughout the country. I encourage the Government and the parties to focus their priorities on the provisions of the agreement which aim to create new and more inclusive and representative institutions, such as the territorial police and the local advisory committees on security, and facilitate the return of

internally displaced persons and refugees. Moving forward, a successful cantonment, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process constitutes a prerequisite for a lasting peace in Mali.

62. Another immediate priority following the signing of the peace agreement is to ensure that the Comité de suivi de l'accord and its subcommittees are fully functional and inclusive of all stakeholders. That will involve, most importantly, ensuring the participation and commitment of the signatories of the peace and reconciliation agreement to the peace architecture and follow-up mechanisms established. I welcome the adoption by the Comité of its rules of procedure and the establishment of the four subcommittees provided for in the agreement. The United Nations, through MINUSMA, will continue to support the parties in accelerating the full operationalization of the Comité and its related mechanisms, including helping to overcome the delays already encountered in the implementation of the agreement.

63. I welcome the efforts of the Commission technique de sécurité at its meeting on 1 and 2 September to accelerate the implementation of security arrangements, in particular following the events that took place in Anéfis in mid-August. In the same vein, the joint observation and verification teams remain an important mechanism to build trust among the parties at this delicate juncture through their monitoring and verification of the ceasefire. I call upon all the parties to fully cooperate with the work of the Commission and adhere to the joint observation and verification team mechanism, to facilitate the establishment of additional joint observation and verification teams in all the regions of northern Mali and to expedite the establishment of the Mécanisme opérationnel de coordination. The mechanisms will help create the conditions for an environment propitious to the return of displaced populations, the redeployment of the State administration, the delivery of basic services and the implementation of an early recovery programme.

64. I am deeply concerned by the growing number of attacks targeting MINUSMA and the Malian defence and security forces by violent extremist and terrorist groups. The attacks are unacceptable. I strongly condemn the crimes and express my deepest condolences to the families of the victims as well as to the Government of Mali and the Governments of the countries of the United Nations peacekeepers who lost their lives. The attacks against MINUSMA and its contractors could constitute war crimes. I reiterate my appeal for the crimes to be investigated and the perpetrators to be punished in earnest.

65. The security situation in Mali and the threat posed by terrorist groups to the wider Sahel region remain alarming, as demonstrated by the recent attacks on the borders with Côte d'Ivoire and Mauritania claimed by Ansar Dine. In the current situation, marked by instability, insecurity, drug-trafficking and terrorism, MINUSMA has a vital role to play in support of the still fragile stability and will continue to enhance its posture, in particular to deter ceasefire violations and protect civilians. The Mission's presence in the north, though strong, needs to be reinforced with enablers and force multipliers, especially in view of the immense gap between its capabilities and the security and terrorist threat. I call upon the international community to remain fully engaged in assisting MINUSMA in its efforts to stabilize the situation. In particular, I encourage Member States in the region to cooperate more closely over the coming months to address the threat at a subregional level, including measures to prevent and counter violent extremism. The United Nations remains committed to supporting the regional efforts under way to enhance security

cooperation through the Group of Five for the Sahel and the Nouakchott Process on the enhancement of security cooperation and the operationalization of the African Peace and Security Architecture in the Sahelo-Saharan region. I look forward to the operationalization of the cross-border joint patrols that will complement and bolster the stabilization efforts of MINUSMA and the upcoming redeployment of the reformed Malian armed forces to northern Mali.

66. The gross human rights violations that continue to be committed throughout Mali are unacceptable. I appeal to the Malian leaders to place the protection of human rights and the fight against impunity among their highest priorities. The peace agreement provides that no individual suspected of war crimes or serious human rights violations will receive amnesty. MINUSMA and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights will continue to work closely with the parties in that regard. I welcome the establishment by the Government of Mali of the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission, and the appointment of its Chair. I urge the Malian authorities to ensure transparency in the work of the Commission. To ensure inclusivity, I strongly encourage the parties to designate their representatives to the Commission and provide space for civil society, particularly women, youth and religious and traditional leaders.

67. United Nations peacekeeping operations rely on cooperation with other partners to consolidate peace. I call upon all stakeholders to coordinate their efforts with my Special Representative and to harmonize initiatives aimed at maximizing results in Mali. I am pleased to note that the World Bank, the African Development Bank and the Islamic Development Bank are already preparing to conduct a needs assessment for the north. I am also encouraged that other donors are increasing their assistance to the country. I call upon the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes to continue to increase humanitarian assistance to those in dire need of basic services, particularly in the north, and for donors to contribute to the still underfunded 2015 humanitarian appeal for Mali. The humanitarian response will strengthen resilience and help to offset the effect of unforeseen environmental shocks that could reverse the gains of the past few months. Meanwhile, I urge Member States to contribute to the Trust Fund in Support of Peace and Security for Mali to allow for the rapid delivery of peace dividends to the population.

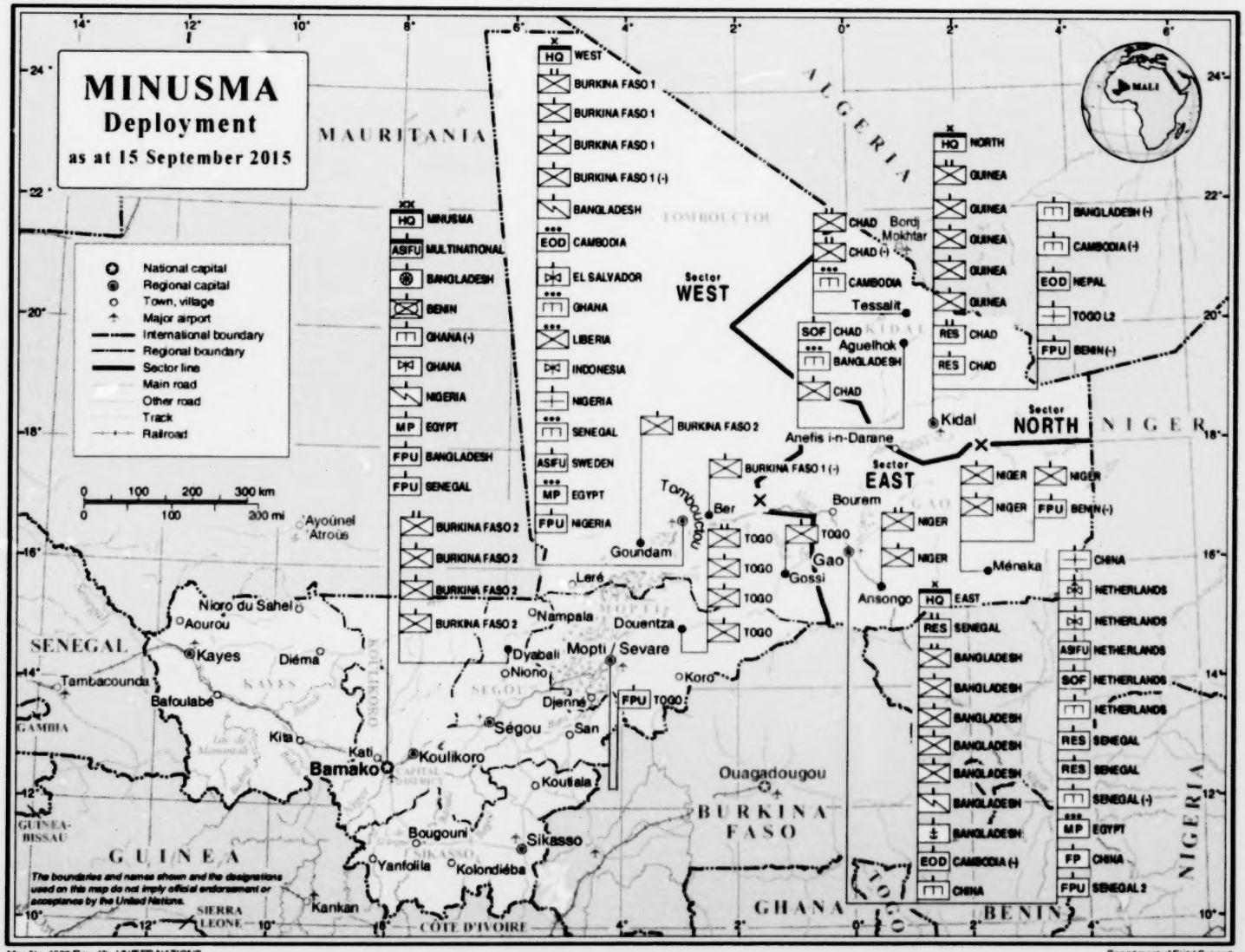
68. The signing of the peace agreement is a milestone for the United Nations. Since July 2013, a key role of MINUSMA has been to support an inclusive inter-Malian dialogue that addresses reconciliation and security challenges. I wish to thank my Special Representative, Mongi Hamdi, for his determination and tireless efforts in advancing the peace process. I also wish to pay special tribute to the men and women of MINUSMA, troop-contributing countries, police-contributing countries, the African Union, ECOWAS, the European Union and bilateral partners, the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes and non-governmental organizations and all other partners, many of whom have been serving under difficult conditions and facing grave threats in a hostile environment, for their important contributions in support of peace and stability in Mali and for their dedication and contribution to the Mission.

Annex

United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali: military and police strength as at 15 September 2015

	Military component (staff officers and units)			*Police component*								
				Individual police officers			*Formed police units*			*Total police*		
Country	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*
Armenia	1	–	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Bangladesh	1 574	–	1 574	–	–	–	140	–	140	140	–	140
Benin	256	–	256	25	–	25	139	–	139	164	–	164
Bhutan	3	–	3	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Bosnia and Herzegovina	1	–	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Burkina Faso	1 693	20	1 713	12	2	14	–	–	–	12	2	14
Burundi	–	–	–	13	–	13	–	–	–	13	–	13
Cambodia	288	13	301	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Cameroon	3	–	3	17	1	18	–	–	–	17	1	18
Chad	1 095	13	1 108	4	–	4	–	–	–	4	–	4
China	388	14	402	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Côte d'Ivoire	122	–	122	7	1	8	–	–	–	7	1	8
Democratic Republic of the Congo	–	–	–	5	1	6	–	–	–	5	1	6
Denmark	18	2	20	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Djibouti	–	–	–	1	–	1	–	–	–	1	–	1
Egypt	65	–	65	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
El Salvador	87	4	91	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Estonia	9	1	10	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Finland	5	–	5	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
France	19	–	19	5	–	5	–	–	–	5	–	5
Gambia	3	–	3	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Germany	8	–	8	4	–	4	–	–	–	4	–	4
Ghana	215	–	215	1	–	1	–	–	–	1	–	1
Guinea	856	1	857	4	–	4	–	–	–	4	–	4
Guinea-Bissau	1	–	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Indonesia	37	2	39	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Italy	2	–	2	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Jordan	1	–	1	3	–	3	–	–	–	3	–	3
Kenya	3	1	4	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Liberia	47	2	49	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Madagascar	–	–	–	2	–	2	–	–	–	2	–	2
Nepal	144	4	148	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–

	Military component (staff officers and units)			*Police component*								
				Individual police officers			*Formed police units*			*Total police*		
Country	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*
Netherlands	510	27	537	15	6	21	–	–	–	15	6	21
Niger	854	5	859	8	–	8	–	–	–	8	–	8
Nigeria	155	25	180	2	–	2	110	29	139	110	29	139
Norway	18	3	21	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Portugal	2	–	2	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Romania	1	–	1	2	–	2	–	–	–	2	–	2
Senegal	673	2	675	16	2	18	275	4	279	291	6	297
Sierra Leone	4	–	4	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Sweden	211	15	226	1	2	3	–	–	–	1	2	3
Switzerland	3	–	3	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Togo	916	18	934	3	–	3	134	6	140	137	6	143
Tunisia	–	–	–	10	–	10	–	–	–	10	–	10
Turkey	–	–	–	1	–	1	–	–	–	1	–	1
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	2	–	2	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
United States of America	10	–	10	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Yemen	7	–	7	9	–	9	–	–	–	9	–	9
Total	**10 310**	**172**	**10 482**	**170**	**16**	**186**	**798**	**39**	**837**	**968**	**55**	**1 023**



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